

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 000989

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/17/2014

TAGS: [PREL](#) [AL](#) [SR](#) [BS](#) [EUN](#) [HZ](#)

SUBJECT: US-ITALIAN GOALS FOR BALKANS: "PLAYING THE SAME
TUNE ON DIFFERENT INSTRUMENTS"

REF: STATE 44531

Classified By: POL MINISTER COUNSELOR TOM COUNTRYMAN. REASON:1.4 (B)(D)
)

1. (C) Summary. In meetings with MFA Political Director Terzi and European Affairs Director-General Caracciolo, DAS Stephens heard a strong Italian pledge of continued participation and cooperation with the US in the Balkans. Terzi said that Italy was focusing on a number of important issues, from the new political structure in Pristina to SFOR-ESDP handover and post-Ashdown OHR in Bosnia to Croatian and Serbian compliance with ICTY commitments. Italy was relieved by both Kosovo PM Haradinaj's decision to resign and go peacefully to The Hague, and by the relative calmness with which news of the indictment was received by the general population. Next steps include the selection of a new Prime Minister and legislation to safeguard K-Serbs and allow access to religious shrines. Stephens urged that the EU use the leverage of the Feasibility Study to keep Belgrade focused on the proximate goal of the "3 generals" and on the ultimate goal of Mladic and Karadzic's arrest and transfer to The Hague. Belgrade is "watching Zagreb," underscoring the importance of maintaining the EU's line on Gotovina. Italy is working now with its Contact Group partners on building blocks for the "Key Messages" on Kosovo's future status, to include: no partition; minority protections; access to religious sites; and continued international presence. The Italians are also thinking about an "Ashdown-like" figure to administer the international presence.

2. (C) Summary Continued: During his February 23 visit to the region, FM Fini voiced the general European view that the will of the people must be respected regarding continued Montenegrin membership in the SAM Union. He could not agree when Montenegrin President Vujanovic asserted that a separate and independent Montenegro would be a stabilizing development. Caracciolo said Italy would stand firm on Croatia in Brussels. Italy was thinking about a narrower mandate for the post-Ashdown OHR, and would nominate a replacement candidate. End Summary.

POSITIVE/PRAGMATIC TONE

3. (C) On March 15, EUR DAS Kathy Stephens and EUR/SCE Deputy Director Eric Gaudiosi had separate meetings with MFA Political Director Terzi and European Affairs Director-General Caracciolo. POL Minister-Counselor and Poloff accompanied. Balkans Affairs Office Director Raimondo De Cardona also participated on the Italian side, and hosted a lunch following the MFA meetings. The overall tone from Terzi and Caracciolo (Italian Ambassador in Belgrade 2000-2003), was upbeat but pragmatic. Both sides recognized the progress made in stabilizing the region over the past year, and agreed that Europe and the US must remain engaged through the Contact Group and other multilateral institutions if the final push to resolve remaining issues region-wide is to be successful. Caracciolo underlined the similarity of US and Italian positions and approaches, asserting that we are "playing the same tune on different instruments." That morning's bombing of Rugova's motorcade in Kosovo was indicative of the still fragile situation on the ground. Terzi emphasized Italy's special interest in the Balkans, given its geographical proximity and historical ties. He had hosted a lunch for contact group Ambassadors the previous week (POLMIN attended for US) during which all agreed that the highest priority now is Kosovo, given the upcoming standards report and Haradinaj's departure for The Hague. That said, no one issue can be looked at in isolation in the Balkans, and Italy was focusing on a number of priorities, from the new political structure in Pristina to SFOR-ESDP handover and post-Ashdown OHR in Bosnia to Croatian and Serbian compliance with ICTY commitments.

HARADINAJ RESIGNATION

4. (C) Terzi said he was relieved by both Haradinaj's decision resign and go peacefully to The Hague, and by the relative calmness with which news of the indictment was

received by the general population in Kosovo. Terzi credited Haradinaj with keeping a lid on the situation by involving his political deputies early in the process, and urging calm in his public statements following the decision. Terzi said that SRSJG Jessen-Petersen's remarks praising Haradinaj may have been a bit over the top, but noted that the two had developed a personal relationship over the past few months and predicted that the long-term consequences of the statement would be "marginal." What is important is that a

crisis had been defused and a strong message on the impartiality of the ICTY had been sent to Zagreb, Belgrade and Sarajevo. Terzi noted that the next step is the selection of a new Prime Minister to replace Haradinaj. It is essential the incumbent has credibility, be an efficient administrator and cooperative interlocutor for Belgrade. The IC has a bit of a dilemma, continued Terzi, between using its influence to ensure such a person is selected, and creating a perception that it is interfering in an internal political decision.

IC ROLE

15. (C) DAS Stephens reiterated US appreciation for Italian efforts in the region, and for its continued close coordination with the US on its multilateral and bilateral Balkans initiatives. She concurred with Caracciolo's observation that we must guard against EU "enlargement fatigue," and pressed Italy to think creatively, as an EU member, about means to accelerate the region's Euro-Atlantic integration. She also agreed with Terzi's view that the IC has a strong interest in seeing that the right person is selected to replace Haradinaj, but there was a "tension" between influence and interference. The US has made clear to Peterson it wants to see a broadly representative PISG committed to active implementation of Standards. Time is running short, and the IC cannot afford any backsliding on progress made during Haradinaj's administration. Caracciolo noted that after Haradinaj, the list of responsible political interlocutors is quite small. For instance, his impression of Rugova from his visit (accompanying Fini) was very negative. Rugova seems committed to the hard-liners among Haradinaj's supporters, and continues to insist on full independence for Kosovo with immediate EU recognition. Caracciolo also suspects Rugova has a drinking problem - "It was his worst performance in years."

REGIONAL APPROACH

16. (C) Terzi cited legislation to safeguard K-Serbs and allow access to religious shrines as critical next steps. Stephens emphasized the need to carefully craft the script for the Contact Group Political Director's April 12 visit to Pristina and Belgrade. It should follow closely the message in the letter from Secretary Rice which Stephens had carried to Rome for FM Fini: the way ahead in Kosovo cannot be looked at in isolation, but rather in the broader context of a regional move toward European institutions, and reaffirm continued trans-Atlantic involvement, including US participation in KFOR. Stephens noted a recent article in the Financial Times by former Italian PM Amato as the type of creative thinking necessary to move the process along. (Embassy Note: We are often struck by the fact that Italy's voice is often inversely proportional to its interests in the Balkans. Fini's identification of the region as one of the key US-EU priorities may change that and is worth noting as the IC prepares for more high-level travel to the region. End Note.) Both Caracciolo and Terzi noted that Belgrade is aware that it cannot stop and is falling behind the trend towards regional integration of its Former-Yugoslav neighbors, and must be encouraged to engage actively in this process. De Cardona noted the challenge the IC faces in this regard given the current leadership vacuum in Belgrade.

17. (C) Terzi agreed that the Amato piece was well written and "influential." He said that during his visit to the region, Fini tried to convey to all interlocutors, Serb and Kosovar alike, that there was "light at the end of the tunnel" and that the standards review was a step in the evolution towards a government in Pristina with broad authorities but connection to a "European dimension" to include some type of security presence as a stabilizing component. Fini stressed, with DPM Labus particularly, the need for active and cooperative Belgrade participation, for example, encouraging K-Serbs to participate in elections. Italy was working now with its Contact Group partners on building blocks for the "Key Messages" on Kosovo's future status, to include: no partition; minority protections; access to religious sites; and a continued international presence. Caracciolo added that the Italians were also thinking of a "Bosnia model" for Kosovo - not partition, but

an "Ashdown-like" figure to administer the international presence. We should also use pieces from the OHRID agreement and Serbian ideas on status, mixing the best of these and other initiatives and apply to Kosovo as appropriate. the threat of violence cannot be used to drive the process in Kosovo. Caracciolo would be traveling to Athens and Vienna the following week to brief governments there and enlist support and ideas. He lamented Greece's still inflexible

position on the "Macedonia" name issue and expected the Italian Parliament to vote to take a similar position to the US' in the near future.

ICTY COOPERATION

18. (C) Stephens said that the US was encouraged by the recent improved level of cooperation with the ICTY, noting that the transfer rate of PIFWCs to the Hague has increased dramatically in recent weeks. The results represented the effect of the US and EU speaking with one voice on the necessity of accused war criminals being brought to justice. Stephens hoped that the EU would use the leverage of the Feasibility Study to keep Belgrade focused on the proximate goal of the "3 generals" and on the ultimate goal of Mladic and Karadzic's arrest and transfer to The Hague. Belgrade is "watching Zagreb," underscoring the importance of maintaining the EU's line on Gotovina." Caracciolo noted that Fini had reminded Kostunica that he too was a "man of the right," but underscored that there was a difference between patriotism and the extremism of the Yugoslav wars, and that PIFWCs were "not heroes but criminals."

19. (C) Terzi agreed that pressure must be kept on governments region-wide for full ICTY compliance. However, he argued that the Feasibility Study was simply a preparatory phase" in the accession process. He guaranteed that the EU would, in parallel, continue to urge Belgrade to pursue more actively war criminals living in areas or among populations it controls or influences. Caracciolo said Italy would stand firm on Croatia in Brussels, urging member states to complete the "negotiating framework" for Croatia but placing the process on hold until Gotovina arrives in The Hague.

SAM UNION

10. (C) Terzi reported that Fini also discussed SAM union issues with Montenegrin President Vujanovic in Belgrade. Fini concurred with the general European view that the will of the people must be respected regarding continued Montenegrin membership in the Union. However, Fini could not agree when Vujanovic asserted that a separate and independent Montenegro would be a stabilizing development. For instance, Montenegro could not advance within the EU's Stabilization and Association process without Serbia as an economic driver. Caracciolo worried about the presence of a "rogue state" in its neighborhood created by a referendum that excluded votes of Montenegrins living in Serbia.

BOSNIA POST-ASHDOWN

11. (C) Stephens said that with approaching 10th anniversary of Dayton and imminent departure of HiRep Ashdown, the US had been thinking about the structure and personnel that make up the international presence in Bosnia, and asked whether Italians had been doing the same. Terzi said that Italy had not reached final decisions, but was thinking about a narrower mandate for the post-Ashdown OHR, as a signal to Bosnians that they have made some progress over the past 10 years, and as a way to increase the "European Dimension" role within the IC presence. Italy would be putting forward a candidate to replace Ashdown, and was thinking along the lines of an "ambassadorial" candidate, rather than someone from the "political circuit." Caracciolo had visited Bosnia with Fini, where their meetings had included talks with US military officials. He had come away "concerned" at the slow rate of progress and foresaw a continued strong international presence for some time.

12 (U) DAS Stephens has cleared this message.

SEMBLER

NNNN
2005ROME00989 - Classification: CONFIDENTIAL